FROM 'FOREIGN DEVILS' TO 'FOREIGN TICKETS': BANDIT CAPTIVITY MEMOIRS FROM REPUBLICAN CHINA*

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1. Introduction: 'Esteemed Guests of the Chinese Bandits'

To the vast majority of readers of the contemporary treaty-port press, the banditry that accompanied China's early 20th century attempts to transform itself into a modern nation merely confirmed their long-held assumption of the impossibility of such a transformation ever happening. For a tiny minority of them, however, banditry was more than a titillating, sometimes shocking read. These were the 'foreign tickets', men and women whose fate it had been to fall into the hands of one of these gangs and be held as an 'insurance' ticket against whatever it was that that particular gang was demanding.

Inseparable as banditry was from the chaotic process of China's rebirth, were it not for the experiences of those foreign tickets we would know

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little about its detailed workings, for bandit life-stories are hard to track down. Fortunately, many of those who survived their captivity set down their experiences in the form of a memoir. From those memoirs, we are able to learn something of what it meant not only to be a foreign ticket, but also to be a bandit in those turbulent years. Through the prism of such accounts, this article seeks new insights into the nature of Chinese bandits and banditry, and pursues aspects of the mutual regard that often grew up between bandits and their foreign captives.

In its January 3, 1926 issue, the influential Shanghai weekly *Guowen zhoubao*, considered by many as having the best current affairs coverage, commenced its 10-part serialization of a first-hand account of life among a Chinese bandit gang, titled "A Tale of Survival in a Bandit Lair" (*Feiku yusheng shu*). It was a time when public opinion was growing incensed at increasingly audacious bandit attacks taking place the length and breadth of China, and even more so at the apparent inability of the authorities to do anything to stop them. What made the situation still more pressing was that foreigners were now being regularly selected as targets, and the serialization was in fact an abridged translation of the survivor's story of one of the latest of such 'outrages'. In his foreword, the translator sought to draw readers' attention to the story's significance:

> The American doctor, Howard, was captured by bandits in the Three Eastern Provinces [Manchuria] this past July, and held for two and a half months before finally being released. The present piece is his own detailed account of his capture and of the days he spent in the bandits' lair. Now the bandit catastrophe has spread almost throughout our country, and is especially serious in the provinces of the Northeast. Since bandit depredations have become such a serious law-enforcement issue, the facts set out in this account are worth taking seriously. (*Guowen zhoubao*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Jan. 3 1926), p. 26)

Howard's (1926) painfully detailed record of his 77 days' captivity in Heilongjiang, titled *Ten Weeks With Chinese Bandits*, was eye opening in the extreme. Carried over a period of 10 weeks (January to March, 1926), it brought the social crisis in China home, in a fascinating way, to

concerned intellectuals, for whom the *Guowen zhoubao* was required reading.[1] And, above all, it was extremely moving, for the author's facility in Chinese enabled him to conduct numerous far-reaching conversations with his captors that, for those who cared to notice, revealed bandits in an unprecedentedly human, if not always flattering light.

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By the early 20th century, foreign pressure had made the Chinese authorities' traditional policy of exclusion no longer sustainable. As a result, foreigners of varying ranks and persuasions had begun jostling each other for admission to the interior, supplying China's bandits with both new targets and new parameters for their time-honoured practice of kidnapping victims for ransom. Eventually, the term 'foreign ticket' (*yang-piao*) became one of the most familiar catchwords of Republican China (1912-1949). At the same time, its apparent benignity concealed an array of torments endured by many of the captives that were beyond most of their compatriots' imagination. Vermin, insect bites, untreated wounds, harsh bindings, forced marches, and roofless shelters were only a few of the grim privations they endured while they were yanked around from village to village before the eyes of astonished peasants. There was one consolation for those who wish to know more about this painful episode in China's not-so-distant history, however: this was that, as noted above, some of those who managed to escape from their captors' clutches, like Harvey James Howard, were ready to relive their painful memories by writing out their memoirs. Through actually listening to what the bandits themselves wanted to say, many of them were able to record, in varying degrees of detail, the 'intimate' aspects of banditry that are otherwise so difficult to pin down. The record of these captives' experiences affords us the opportunity for a peep into an otherwise inaccessible area of Chinese life, and in most cases what they left behind was far more than a mere record of their days of deprivation. (Tribute is also due, it should be added, to the minority who paid the ultimate price at the bandits' hands and who have, as a result, been almost without exception forgotten.)[2]

Scattered among various libraries and archives, and often difficult to

locate, these memoirs – some long, some short, some wonderfully perceptive, others woefully blinkered – have been largely ignored by historians.[3] Despite the impact of the *Guowen zhoubao*'s serialization of Howard's memoirs, none of the others seem to have been translated into Chinese until very recently.[4] And yet a dip into the writings of these one-time foreign tickets takes us into the very heart of the world of Chinese bandits, where we learn about the organization of their gangs, the pattern of their everyday lives, their treatment of their captives, their feelings about being bandits, and their hopes for the future. We learn too about bandits' 'world-view', including their ideas about Western civilization. Above all, the experiences of these foreign captives and the detailed and unique observations that often grew out of them provide us with a multitude of insights into the painful and problem-riddled world of early 20th century rural China, and into the slow transformation that was taking place there. If the voices that speak to us from the lines of those now-yellowed pages are those of the once-mighty foreigner brought rudely to an awareness of his or her vulnerability, the cries that leap out at us from between those lines issue from the mouths of China's long-suffering peasants.

2. *From 'Foreign Devils' to 'Foreign Tickets': Bandits and Foreigners in Early Republican China*

The people fear the officials; the officials fear the foreigners; the foreigners fear the people.

This popular saying of the late Qing period (1644-1911) succinctly revealed the delicate three-way power relationship that impressed itself with increasing force upon the Chinese countryside from the second half of the 19th century onwards. Full-scale foreign intervention in response to the attacks on missionaries and mission property during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, however, taught a fierce lesson. For the next decade, more or less, foreigners were able to live fairly tranquil lives in an other-

wise seething interior.

Bandit attacks on foreigners began to increase after the 1911 Revolution, usually as a result of the military upheavals that accompanied the frequent rebellions and changes of government. Still, it was not until the 1920s that the problem began to assume serious proportions. The bandits involved in these assaults on foreigners were generally motivated not by the xenophobia that had fuelled worried Confucians of the old regime, but by the realization that the very aura of sanctity that surrounded these unlikely representatives of China's humiliation could be turned to the attackers' own advantage. Thus, despite complaints in mission magazines of a growing disregard for foreign lives, it seems to have been merely the 'untouchability' of the foreigner that was disappearing: bandits rarely killed foreigners except by accident or in self-defense. As captives, though, foreigners offered unique advantages, and as a result, these 'outrages' became more or less self-generating during the early years of the Republic. In the rest of this section, we look at the reasons behind this development and then offer a brief review of the major 'bandit incidents' and of the memoirs spawned by them.

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> *Having been made destitute and loneless [sic] through incessant civil wars, we are obliged to invite a few foreigners to come up the hill, so that we can make use of them to enforce certain demands and secure certain guarantees.... We have no intention of ill-treating the foreigners....*
> (W. W. Chen, 1923: 10)

There were numerous reasons why bandits should prefer to kidnap foreigners to Chinese, all of which, as most foreign captives realized, amounted to a striking change not only in the status of 'The Foreigner in China', but also in the level of political consciousness of the bandits themselves. This transition, from being the 'foreign devils' of Boxer-era propaganda to becoming the 'foreign tickets' of Republican-era bandit gangs, is a little-examined but significant transformation.

The first reason, of course, was foreigners' financial value, since Chinese families could rarely be expected to pay the sums available to

foreign governments. (Davies, 1926: 189; Howard, 1926: 201) As one Fujian chief put it, "This branch of the bandit industry... was much more profitable than carrying off other Chinese, who could not pay big ransoms and who frequently had to be killed after capture." (Mackay, 1927: 251) Second, bandits understood that the life of a Chinese, however rich and influential, was primarily a humanitarian matter, whereas that of a foreigner involved something that in the context of the times loomed much larger: politics. Kidnapping a foreigner was a sure way to get the higher authorities involved in the case, who were then obliged to solve it by political means.

Bandits frequently sought to be enrolled in the army, and foreigners were also invaluable bargaining chips when it came to negotiating the terms. Letters from them or from the bandits to their families or to the authorities, describing their living conditions or stating the bandits' conditions, had a persuasive power all of their own. (Mackay, 1927: 189; Howard, 1926: 50-51, 148-49; Pawley, 1935: 132-33, 153-54, 167; 233-34, 240-41) "Speak a good word for us when you are free," were one chief's last words to a captive on the final night of his captivity. (Lundeen, 1925: 134) Hemmed in on all sides a few days after carrying out the headline-grabbing Lincheng Incident (see below for details), the bandits employed one of their hostages, the Shanghai newspaperman J. B. Powell, as their scribe:

> General Ho, Commander, Chinese Government Troops:
>
> The chief... instructs us to write you this letter, demanding that you order your troops to cease firing at once. Otherwise the bandits will kill all the foreign and Chinese captives.
>
> (Signed) J. B. Powell, on behalf of the foreign captives. (Powell, 1923a: 847)

Foreign captives also provided the gang with an impregnable shield against military attack, since the Chinese authorities feared nothing more than sparking off another diplomatic crisis and possible foreign intervention by endangering a captive's life. Again, having these precious foreign lives dangling from a string usually enabled the bandits to insure themselves against one of the Chinese authorities' favourite tricks, which was to

arrest their relatives and hold them against the gang's surrender. (Taylor, 1922a: 27-8, 38-43) This, if anything, was the very opposite of the oft-bewailed 'loss of respect for the white man'. No wonder that bandits referred to their foreign captives as their "golden eggs" (Powell, 1923b: title), or as the "fat sheep with the precious wool". (Strauss, 1931: 12)

Indeed, when it came to negotiating the terms for the release of their captives, it was clear that the bandits entertained far more respect for the representatives of foreign governments than they did for their own government's emissaries. (Allen, 1921: 29-30) Because of this, and because of its own abiding mistrust of the Chinese government's ability to keep its word, the foreign community usually sent its own representatives along to the negotiations, often in the guise of mediators or 'guarantors', to make sure that things went as they should. Missionaries were also frequently able to pass unscathed between the bandit camp and the outside world. (Powell, 1945: 105; Fitch, 1918: 781; Nozinski, 1990: 39-40, 112-13) As Roy Anderson, chief foreign emissary to the negotiations that followed the Lincheng Incident, remarked:

> It is a fine kettle of fish when a foreigner has to sign a document guaranteeing the good faith of the Republic of China. (Powell, 1923b: 956)[5]

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While the 1911 Revolution has usually been dismissed as having inaugurated a republican era in name only, its effects were being felt at levels not always visible to the casual observer. The proliferation of armies after the death of President Yuan Shikai in 1916 is rightly blamed for China's descent into chaos, and the May 4 Movement of 1919 is held up as the birth of a new consciousness that, even while it intensified the chaos and drew it onto the plane of intellectual debate, would ultimately lead to China's remaking. Yet there was another transformation taking place far from the eyes of big-city intellectuals and treaty-port pontiffs, one which we would have little information about were it not for those whose privilege or misfortune it was to observe it from the inside: the foreign tickets.

The burgeoning of armies after 1916, as militarists sought to bolster

their claims to power against the counterclaims of rivals, left rural economic life a shambles, reduced many villages to shells, and raised the curtain on what has been referred to as the 'Long Night' of modern Chinese history. (Yao Xueyin, 1991-96: title) At the same time, the siphoning into the army of so many village youths who would otherwise have spent their entire lives tilling the soil meant that, in a rudimentary way, unprecedented information began to filter through to China's once-isolated villages. The mobility they enjoyed as soldiers taught such youths the possibility of alternative ways of life, introduced them to other communities beyond their own, and opened their eyes to great happenings in China and even in the world beyond. Instead of an aloof but rock-steady imperial elite, they learned, a jostling throng of rival power-holders now fought for the reins of China's destiny. This in turn encouraged these rural youths to believe that fate was perhaps not so immovable after all, or that power-struggles at the top justified similar ones at the bottom. When their commander's military reverses gave them the choice between returning empty-handed to their fields or taking to the hills with their guns, the latter was a logical choice, and so it was that these newly-generated ambitions came to be played out under the guise of banditry.

The collapse of the central government in mid-1922 following the first Fengtian-Zhili war sent thousands of such soldiers fleeing into the mountains of north-central China with their weapons to join the bandit gangs already thriving in that hostile physical environment. Compilers of local gazetteers sighed as one, for the influx of desperate soldiers triggered a phenomenon on the Chinese bandit scene whose like had not been seen since the last days of the Ming three centuries before: soldier bandit armies.[6] They plagued most of China for much of the next ten years, and it would be decades before north China would again know a full year of peace. The development also spawned that new variant on expatriate writing from China, the 'bandit captivity memoir'.

As the man who "introduced the sport of kidnapping foreigners", the Henan chief Zhang Qing, better known under his nickname of Lao Yangren ('The Old Foreigner'), was chiefly responsible for the state of affairs that developed in north China in the 1920s. Already operating in the

mountains of Henan before the Fengtian-Zhili war began, with his charisma he provided a natural rallying point for many of the ex-soldiers mentioned above, and in a matter of months he found himself at the head of a band numbering in the thousands. On June 9, 1922, a month after he began his campaign to force the government to recognize his military ambitions, he carried off a Norwegian missionary, followed, on August 24, by a Frenchman and a Greek, then an Italian. On October 13 it was the turn of an American and a Swede to be carried off; in the same month three Britons were taken; and in early November they were joined by another American and his son. By the end of the month Lao Yangren was holding fourteen foreign hostages, and the government, under threat of an international commission of investigation, caved in, agreeing to enroll the chief with high military rank at the head of his followers. (*Dongfang zazhi*, consecutive issues, December 1922 to January 1923) In the aftermath of the mayhem, several accounts of captivity with Lao Yangren's band were published, most notably that of the American missionary, Anton Lundeen. Lundeen's Chinese ability, his open mind, and his basic understanding of the conditions producing the bandits make his memoir, *In the Grip of Bandits and Yet in the Hands of God* (1925), one of the most perceptive that we have. At least half a dozen shorter but still important captive accounts also appeared, mostly written by Lundeen's fellow-missionaries. (Darroch & Sharp, 1924; Ledgard, 1923; Soderstrom, 1923; Weller, 1931; Walker, 1923; Bird, 1922).

The lesson of Lao Yangren's enrollment was well taken by China's bandits. May 1923 saw the Lincheng Incident, when more than a score of foreigners (as well as 300 or more Chinese, whose fate was, ironically, quite ignored by the press) were kidnapped following an attack on a crack express train as it passed through Lincheng, Shandong. Many of them were subsequently held hostage for months, and emerged to contribute another burst of captivity narratives. Among them, "A Week-End With Chinese Bandits" by Lucy Truman Aldrich (1923), sister-in-law of the American billionaire John D. Rockefeller, Jr., written in the form of a letter to her sister-in-law following her release, is remarkable for its vivid descriptions but limited as Aldrich was released after only a few

days. Much more informative are the two articles by *China Weekly Review* publisher J. B. Powell. (1923a, 1923b) Written secretly on scraps of paper and handed to a villager to be smuggled out of the camp, (Powell, 1945: 106) they bring out clearly the growing tension in the hostages' camp as negotiations for their release swayed back and forth.

When, following the resolution of the Lincheng Incident, many of the bandits responsible were taken on as regular soldiers, the upshot was a spate of similar kidnappings up and down the country, as well as a boom in train hijacks that eventually made foreigners afraid to use the trains at all. (Nagano Akira, 1924: 48) By the following February, when the *China Weekly Review* carried out a survey of foreigners who had suffered at the hands of bandits or soldiers, nine had been killed (including six missionaries), and 35 carried off for ransom, 16 of them missionaries. (*CWR*, February 16, 1924, cited in *The Chinese Recorder*, vol. 55, No. 8 (August 1924), p. 1)

North China was not the only region affected by the political disintegration following the Fengtian-Zhili war. Traditionally fractious Yunnan, whose military leaders' support for the central government had been tenuous, to say the least, saw the same kind of factional infighting as north China did. Yunnan's bandit subculture was as entrenched as that of Henan was, and the effect of the fighting was identical. Numerous bandit chiefs were rewarded with the status of army officer in return for helping one or another of the military rivals, only to be cast into the wilderness again as the fortunes of war were reversed. When they returned to banditry, it was with a fresh ferocity fueled by a new kind of resentment, and once again foreigners became the bargaining chips in their struggle for 'justice'. Among them, Pu Shuming stood out for his audacious kidnapping of the China Inland Mission evangelist Howard Taylor in February 1922, and Taylor's wife Geraldine's story of her husband's six-week captivity, *With P'u and his Brigands*, (Taylor, 1922a) became another classic captivity narrative. A number of other memoirs were engendered by this period in Yunnan's history, including those of Parker (1922), Allen (1921), and Gowman (1920).

Manchuria, because of its frontier conditions, had always been a hotbed

of local defense vigilantes, loosely classified as bandits. This "frontier banditry", as Owen Lattimore termed it, (1932: 225) made conditions rather different from those further south, leading one captive who had encountered both to comment that "my experiences with the bandits of Manchuria were almost as pleasant as those with the bandits of Fukien [Fujian] were terrible". (Mackay, 1927: 253) Bandits increased in number and ruthlessness, however, after the rise of local warlord-dictator Zhang Zuolin and the militarization that resulted. When Zhang, licking his wounds after his defeat in the 1922 war, began weeding out the ex-bandits in his armies, many of these fled, like their counterparts further south, to the mountains with their weapons. There they had a profound effect not only on the standard of life but also on the local bandit subculture. Both bolder and more desperate than before, these bandits too hit on the idea of using foreigners to further their aims, resulting in the capture, in the summer of 1925, of Harvey James Howard, an American eye specialist at Peking Union Medical College who was visiting friends in Heilongjiang. Howard's extraordinary memoir of his ten weeks' captivity, published in the following year, became perhaps the most celebrated of all the captivity narratives to come out of China, thanks to his prodigious memory and lucid prose.

Manchuria's political situation took on a new degree of complexity after the area was annexed by Japan in 1931. To the existing gangs of bandits, motivated primarily by economic considerations, was added a new element of political lawlessness, fueled by resentment at the heavy-handed tactics employed by the Japanese military to bring its new colony to heel. Where there were bandits there were now sure to be foreigners in the role of victims, and the Japanese occupation period saw two major kidnapping cases which both had as their backdrop the local desire for revenge.

The first came in October 1932, almost immediately after the formal inauguration of the puppet state of 'Manchukuo' and in the midst of the Japanese government's attempts to have its creation recognized by the League of Nations. After Muriel 'Tinko' Pawley, teenaged daughter of an English doctor in Niuzhuang, Liaoning, was seized together with a

male companion, the bandits stated explicitly not only that the Japanese were to blame for the kidnapping but also that Japan should pay the ransom. (Pawley, 1935: 139, 153-54, 196) After a long standoff, the incident was finally resolved by the intervention of a Japanese-sponsored bandit chief. (Billingsley, 1988: 221-22) Pawley's (1935) story of her captivity, *My Bandit Hosts*, despite its light-hearted, almost naive tone (she was only 18 years old when captured, and told her story to a journalist the following summer) was almost as stark and eye opening as Howard's had been.

Only six months later, another incident reminded the Japanese government that resentment remained strong, and simultaneously sent a fresh tremor of rage through the European expatriate community. This was the March 1933 kidnapping of four British Merchant Marine officers (one was subsequently released) not far away from where Pawley had been held. The kidnappers, though no more than a small-time pirate band, nevertheless demanded that the ransom be paid by Japan alone, and urged that Britain see to Japan's expulsion from Manchuria. Once again the case proved a hard nut to crack for the military: as Clifford Johnson (1934: 196) put it in his laconic day-by-day diary-style account of the ordeal, *Pirate Junk*, the release was effected only after the intervention of "two Japanese officials ...[who] had originally been bandits themselves".

For the foreign community ensconced safely in the treaty ports, these latest developments underscored their image of a 'brigand-infested' China, summed up as "orgies of murder, robbery, violation of women, and indulgence in opium dreams", (*NCH*, 29 Jan. 1927: 172) and provided the pretext for constant threats of intervention. Concluding that China itself was no more than a huge bandit gang and the Chinese people equivalent to "400,000,000 outlaws", (Gotō Asatarō, 1923: 58, 71-2; MacNair, 1925: 258) China-watchers of the 1930s conveniently ignored the fact that Chinese living under United States jurisdiction routinely suffered far more than foreigners in China did and without the luxury of appealing to their government for aid. (MacNair, 1925: 233) "China can't put ban in banditry until she has put the try", went one supercilious treaty-port joke, but among the Lincheng captives had been nationals of the USA, Italy, and Mexico,

countries where "train robberies and bandits are just matters to be read about and forgotten". (*CWR*, 16 June 1923: 76; *NCH*, 19 May 1923: 467)

Amid the lurid reporting that characterized the treaty-port press' treatment of the bandits spawned by China's descent into chaos, it is sobering to read the firsthand recollections of Anton Lundeen:

> Some people have the impression that the bandits in China are all ignoramuses, but we discover now that this is not true.... Why are these men bandits?.... [W]e can notice traces of a native socialism, Marxism and bolshevism.... These bandits ... make themselves obnoxious and feared to compel the government to give them some position or office in order to make the country safe....
>
> ....[A] few of the bandits have a suspicion that China does not have the proper kind of government, and hope that something similar to the old Monarchy will return....
>
> Generally speaking, however, the outlaws realize that China has advanced in many ways since the ushering in of the Republic. They often mention that there has never been a time in the history of China when so much knowledge is spread abroad.... Formerly the people would suffer any outrage as a necessary evil.... But now they feel that they have rights.... They consider the distribution of property and come to the conclusion that they have a right to own some of it.... How natural it must be for them to become robbers.... (Lundeen, 1925: 125-27)

Lundeen's comments make it clear that any reassessment of the foreigner that was taking place in China was primarily the accompaniment to the birth of a new self-assessment, at least among those who, by taking to banditry, had seized back the right to assert some control over their own lives. Men such as this were disillusioned with the traditional attitude that enjoined all to submit to being trampled upon as the will of fate, and also with an appalling social system in which the unequal distribution of wealth masqueraded as heavenly justice. In this sense, whatever else we say about bandits, we cannot avoid noticing that the sense of power they achieved through their violent behaviour was a powerful antidote to the anomie and helplessness afflicting so many rural people in China.

In choosing foreigners for their victims, moreover, they were consciously or unconsciously declaring, to those prepared to listen rather than call out the army, that China was changing.

3. 'How Natural to Become Robbers!': Bandit Gangs from the Inside

Captives' accounts, while by no means rose tinted, contain a series of surprising revelations that undermine many of the stereotypes of bandits presented in other types of material. Conditioned, like most expatriates, to see their captors as "insensate demons" who "[thought] nothing of tearing children limb from limb", (*The Times* (London), 17 Mar. 1914; *NCH*, 7 July 1923: 3) foreign captives were frequently obliged to reexamine their presumptions. Many found themselves dazzled not only by the range of human types represented within a gang, (Lundeen, 1925: 21; Aldrich, 1923: 673-74) but also by the diverse circumstances that had led their captors into their predatory lifestyle.

Depicted as a band of ignorant ruffians, a typical gang seems nonetheless to have included men (there were few women, both for physical reasons such as bound feet and for less tangible reasons such as the culturally prescribed definition of 'femininity') who had received a fair degree of education before taking to the hills, and even some with relatively illustrious pasts. Billeted with two of his gang's chiefs and invited to listen to their life stories, Howard found himself reflecting (not without condescension) on Sino-American cultural contrasts. One had been an officer in the army of the Zhili general Wu Peifu until the war some two years or so before had seen him disbanded. "Kao did not smoke opium or tobacco; his personal appearance was the acme of cleanliness...." observed Howard. "His conversation was devoid of oaths; it was that of an educated and cultured man. He had no other recourse, he told me, than to become a bandit." His wife and children lived near Beijing, and he hoped to see them in the fall if the soldiers did not kill him before then. (Howard, 1926: 115)

The other chief's story was similar:

> Hai Feng told me his story with a tone of bitterness and hate. He had been, until recently, a police magistrate.... But a sudden change in the political situation had made him a refugee. In order to save his own life and to seek revenge, he had become a bandit, and would remain a bandit until he could get [back] his former position. (Howard, 1926: 115-16)

The stories clearly startled Howard out of his American complacency into a bout of self-questioning:

> What right had I to look upon these men with contempt and a 'holier than thou' attitude? My country is one where opportunity and ambition are handmaids; theirs a land where opportunity too often suffers stillbirth, and where ambition and enterprise leading to success are apt to make one the prey of others who are covetous. (Howard, 1926: 116)

Equally startling was his discovery that the gang's chief letter writer was no less than a "first degree scholar... who at one time had been secretary to one of Chang Tso-lin [Zhang Zuolin]'s generals...." (Howard, 1926: 162) This man had his opium habit to blame for his fall from grace.

If his own account is to be believed, another bandit with a surprising past included a former village schoolmaster. Though we do not learn the details of this man's transition to banditry, Pawley notes that he was one of the few literate bandits, "very proud of his ability to read", and that he even boasted a smattering of Russian. (1935: 146, 96)

Former regular army officers, such as the one introduced above, were fairly common among bandit gangs given the conditions of the Republican period, but the Lincheng gang, because of its special circumstances, was extraordinary. Recent military upheavals had resulted in whole divisions of armies previously loyal to warlords Zhang Xun and Zhang Jingyao deserting to the nearest mountains with their officers. In addition, the recent Japanese occupation of part of Shandong had brought about not only the politicization of the province but also a high degree of economic polarization. The last straw was added by the large number of coolie labourers recruited from the province for the Allied war effort in Europe

and later unceremoniously dumped back where they came from. These provided both a core of worldly-wise and war-hardened leaders and a vast store of tough recruits that, in concert with the foregoing factors, ensured that the Lincheng Incident would seize the world's attention. According to J. B. Powell's recollections,

> .... [T]here was a very interesting chap [who] had become the personal servant of a Russian army officer stationed in China away back before the war... and accompanied his master in campaigns on the German front. After the Russian blow-up, he joined the Bolshevist army and served in Siberia. He claimed to have participated in several Bolshevist raids along the Chinese Eastern Railway and into Mongolia. After the Japanese troops had evacuated Vladivostok and things had settled down in Siberia, he deserted and came back to his old home in Shantung [Shandong] Province.... (1923b: 914)

Lucy Aldrich, whose natural poise allowed her to take most aspects of her captivity in her stride, was startled to find that many of her captors were quite familiar with English. (Aldrich, 1923: 677, 678, 680) Powell and others among the Lincheng captives reported that some of the bandits spoke French or Russian or had even married European women. (Powell, 1923b: 914; Solomon, 1923: 14) The gang that kidnapped Howard actually included two destitute Russians. (Howard, 1926: 42)

Apart from these, there was of course the usual complement of former peasants who had once tilled their fields with no thought in their head of breaking the law. Listening to the life-stories told by all these men brought home to the foreign captives how little could really be understood about banditry simply from reading the daily press, how often their captors' resort to banditry was the result of problems that transcended the individuals concerned. The stories were repeated at every level of the gang, down to the humblest rank and file bandit.

> The Suen family was an old and formerly respected family... reduced to poverty by the bandits; so, as many others had done, Suen and his father and nephew joined the bandit gang and because of the standing of the family became leaders. (Powell, 1923b: 915)

> Chow... was a returned student from Japan and had served as a

battalion commander in the army of Feng Yu-hsiang [Feng Yuxiang] .... He had had trouble with his superiors and had deserted and gone to Shantung, where he joined the bandit gang. (Powell, 1923b: 914-15)

Monkey Face had been a bandit for five years... the bandits had raided his father's home ... and had carried him and his brothers and sisters into captivity. His sisters were sold into slavery, and he and his brothers, in order to save their own lives, had joined the bandit gang. (Powell, 1923b: 914)

He said that he had been captured by the Shantung bandits and forced to join them in order to save his life. (Powell, 1923b: 914)

[T]hese two men, without friends and families, with no work to do and on the verge of starvation, had...finally been persuaded to become bandits. (Howard, 1926: 42)

Another aspect that did not escape the notice of foreign captives was how clear-cut the internal structure of a gang and the delegation of responsibilities within it were, belying its image as a refuge for frenzied reprobates. Amid the 'fierce democracy' that constituted the average bandit gang, for example, only someone of outstanding qualities could become chief, for it was necessary not only to be tough but also to be able to keep a cool head. Most chiefs also seem to have possessed some charismatic quality that made other people take notice and thereby earned them the rank and file's respect. This was especially important when gangs took on the unruly proportions of the soldier bandit army, as Lundeen found just before Lao Yangren's troops set out to carve a swathe across Henan in the autumn of 1922: "The chiefs are riding high-spirited horses.... They sit straight in their saddles as if they own the whole world, and aim to make everyone in the village feel that they are their superiors." (1925: 48) The respect that these outstanding individuals attracted was clear, such as that enjoyed by one chief of the gang that captured Howard, "the only one among them whom I heard addressed as 'Mister'." (Howard, 1926: 36)

Alongside the privilege accruing to the chief's position went responsibility. First was the need to maintain morale: "Shuang Shan reproved them sharply, saying that they must not forget that they were 'hung hutzes'

[*hong huzi*], and that they could expect many more disappointments like this." (Howard, 1926: 184) The chief would also be expected to mediate disagreements and clashes within the gang: "There were frequent noisy quarrels, sometimes ending in fights.... [But] the chief always stepped in and stopped the fights before they grew very serious. He maintained a rude but very effective discipline." (Mackay, 1927: 193) Finally, it sometimes became necessary to punish bandits who had become a hindrance to the gang or who had violated the gang's internal laws. In cases such as these the chief's word was law, even if sometimes reluctantly imposed. "One day," observed Lundeen toward the end of his captivity,

> [A] great cloud of darkness comes over the chief and the entire camp .... [A] bandit... has stolen a blanket in the name of the chief. When news of this reaches the chief's ears, he becomes perfectly beside himself with wrath, and orders that this particular bandit be executed immediately.... For several days, the feeling in the camp is one of great despondency. The chief himself especially is decidedly unhappy ... he lives in an atmosphere of diabolic cursing. (1925: 129-30)

The most chastening episode, however, is one related by Howard of a night when the gang is several hours into a rain-soaked flight from soldiers.

> Two of the bandits were in considerable distress.... We waited in the rain a long time for one of them. When he finally came up, I realized from his gray countenance and his labored breathing that his heart was in bad condition. Shuang Shan calmly told him that his bandit days had better be over. The pale, gasping 'hung hutze' understood. Without a word he took his rifle, went around the bend of the river, and disappeared in the marsh grass. Presently a shot rang out. We knew that his bandit days were over, forever. (1926: 183)

While there seems to have been no questioning of Shuang Shan's order in this case (even Howard appears to have been stunned into silence), generally speaking a chief's authority, though supreme, was never arbitrary. Whenever some major decision loomed, a complex gang made up of several component sections would frequently reach a decision upon its course of action only after holding a conference of its principal leaders.

Lao Yangren's strategic decisions, for example, according to Lundeen's eyewitness account, were never single-handedly taken, and Powell's recollections showed that the planning at Lincheng was being constantly reviewed by the numerous factions concerned. (Lundeen, 1925: 49; Powell, 1945: 97) The heated debates that took place at these meetings, though a source of wonder tempered by anxiety for those who were with the bandits against their will, testified to a surprising degree of democratic spirit.

> The bandits had quickly recognized the master mind of Shuang Shan, and had made him their chief. They respected his authority to a certain degree, but on several occasions I heard him and one or two bandits of the rank and file engage in violent quarrels which sometimes lasted for hours. During these conflicts of words, they called each other all manner of names, and Shuang Shan had to swallow many nasty insinuations impugning his honor as their chief. (Howard, 1926: 166)

Captives' accounts also reveal, among the chiefs in particular, a degree of religious awe that presumably furnished the veneer that papered over the contradiction between the bandits' yearning for a life beyond reproach and the realities of their violent existence. One of Lundeen's chiefs was "a strong Buddhist, and can not live without his god." (Lundeen, 1925: 33) Taylor, in conversation with Pu Shuming concerning the release of some of the chief's men, was favourably impressed by Pu's assertion that "if those seven people are released and I do not release you, I shall be *tui-puh-chu Shang-Ti'* [*duibuzhu shangdi*]- under the displeasure of God." (Taylor, 1922a: 41) Some bandits, impressed by their captives' fortitude, even came to profess a belief in Christianity themselves, while chiefs frequently gave specific orders for churches and their congregations (including, on one occasion, a party of mission schoolgirls) to be protected. (Taylor, 1922a: 60; Pawley, 1935: 31; Lundeen, 1925: 28, 93-96)[7]

Another aspect of the spiritual side of what it meant to be a bandit was their frequent fear of supernatural retribution for their violent behaviour, or their belief in divine intervention in their constant struggle with vengeful soldiers. Alexander Mackay, an employee of the China Import & Export Lumber Company of Shanghai who was captured in

Fujian in 1926, noted:

> It was extraordinary that these men who held me, whose cruelties I had seen time and again and whose consciences, so far as their fellow men were concerned, seemed utterly calloused, were so religious. Often they would take from their belongings a small god and perform rites, burning incense and making bow after bow before this little figure of rude clay.... The leader in these services was always the oldest of the cutthroats, who would severely reprove any suggestion of irreverence on the part of the younger members of the party. (1927: 192)

"Many decisions of the chief," he later adds, "were left to lot," which in his case meant tossing two pieces of flat wood into the air and observing the way they came down. (Mackay, 1927: 193)

Anything perceived to be irreverent or disrespectful toward religious authority came in for the sternest reproach: when Pawley made fun of a portrait of Guan Di in a commandeered peasant hut, the bandits dragged her away, shouting "Be careful!.... The Gods will revenge themselves on you if you do such wicked things!" (Pawley, 1935: 227-28) Whether in Hunan, Fujian or Manchuria, the first thing that many bandits did upon setting up camp was to hold a memorial ceremony for those they had killed, lest their malevolent spirits should subsequently come seeking revenge: "The brigands lived in constant fear of the ghosts of those whom they had murdered. Repeatedly at night there was an alarm because they had heard the voices of spirits. Then incense and paper were burned to the idols in order to appease them...." (Strauss, 1931: 25)

Howard's bandit captors too, at least when their fortunes appeared even bleaker than usual, were inclined to erect a simple shrine close to their camping place to pray for their "success and good health". Whether they worshipped there or not was clearly a matter of individual choice:

> [S]carcely a day passed when several bandits did not worship at the shrine.... Not once did I hear one bandit ridicule another for worshipping. Nor did I ever hear one of them urging another to worship. Each man did as he pleased, and no comment or criticism was made by the others. (Howard, 1926: 225-26)

This respect for the spiritual life seems also to have been reflected in

bandits' attitude toward the Christian subscribers among their captives, who, whether missionary or convert, often came in for surprisingly lenient treatment. (Lundeen, 1925: 131; Taylor, 1922a: 5) The strength of belief shown by the Christians among the Chinese captives, who stood up for the foreign captives most strongly and were the first to extend a helping hand, was not lost on the bandits.

Within the gang, too, there were many spheres of bandits' lives in which their inner fears — and also, perhaps, their innate sense of the indefensibility of the lives they were leading — were reflected in rituals designed to banish those fears to the backs of their minds. Kneeling was forbidden, as was the kowtow, not only because they offended the bandits' pride, but also because they reminded watchers only too vividly of the violent end in store for many of them should they be caught by the soldiers. Similar anxieties led them to avoid the word 'dead' and to replace it with 'asleep', which had "a tone of less finality about it, and did not affect their courage so much". (Howard, 1926: 105)

Nerve-wracking though their captivity may have been, one of the most frequent complaints of the foreign captives was the monotony of their existence ("the same bloody food and the same bloody faces," as Johnson [1934: 143-44] put it). Too valuable or too conspicuous to be allowed to roam at will and too dangerous to be killed, except when their gang was on the march much of the captives' time seems to have been spent awaiting developments. For missionary captives, Bible-reading or, when the Book was not available, silent communion with their God brought relief, (Fischle, 1930: 120, 160; Lundeen, 1925: 30, 46) but for others the hours were harder to fill. "Imagine," said Tinko Pawley,

> being tied for hours to a filthy brick bed with nothing to read or to do except to watch the bandits pick vermin from their clothes and click them between their finger-nails....
>
> The villages we visited were all more or less alike, the questions we were asked by the peasants scarcely ever varied, and we lived for the marches that released us from the kongs [beds] to which we were tethered the moment we entered a human habitation.... If it had not been for the security I felt in Charles' companionship and the parcels

and messages from home, I sometimes think I would have gone mad. (Pawley, 1935: 160-61)

Whether for banishing anxieties or for relieving boredom, opium was essential to bandits' lives, but its value went far beyond its capacity for providing a quick trip to Lethean realms. In a world where hospitals were few and, unless run by good-hearted Western missionaries, unaffordable anyway, opium took the place of medicine. (Pawley, 1935: 68, 105, 165; Johnson, 1934: 84, 112; Howard, 1926: 33, 128, 196) For those strong enough in both mind and body to require neither of these functions, the drug played yet another vital role: as a form of 'hard currency' that could be exchanged for guns and other needed commodities. It was routinely included in packages sent from home to the captives, as well as in ransom payments. (Howard, 1926: 98-101; Pawley, 1935: 131, 182)

Since it was only incidents of violence that tended to make the news as far as bandits were concerned, we are able to put them into more human perspective when we learn from the foreign tickets of the way some of their captors spent their time when not out on a raid. Pawley's gang was typical, whiling away the long hours spent awaiting the outcome of the convoluted, cat-and-mouse ransom negotiations with impromptu concerts:

> During the afternoon the bandits amused themselves by getting a young boy to come and sing to them.... When it was over Freddie the Frog fetched his Chinese lute and regaled the company with his special song which was about a butterfly....
>
> Then the hearties swopped yarns, and as that was just a boasting competition, Sydney carried off the palm quite easily. He sat and stuck out his chest and recounted his glorious achievements in a skirmish with some Japanese troops....
>
> Dirty old Cuthbert the Cuspidor was the most amusing of the lot .... Before his hunghutze days he had worked as Number One boy to a powerful Chinese General, and the hearties loved to egg him on to talk about the General's household.... [H]e had a very comical trick of imitating the high piercing voice of the General's wife. He gave demonstrations of her walk that were masterpieces in caricature. I

> wish you could have seen that filthy diseased old bandit tottering around the room with shrill little squeaks and squawks.... (Pawley, 1935: 114-16)

These unwilling guests also furnished a perfect audience for those bandits who wanted to show off their martial or other skills or to engage in acts of bravado or boastfulness otherwise lost on an already jaded clientele of fellow bandits. Whether it was for their benefit or not, heated discussions among the bandits of what each would do with his share of the ransom money brought the captives at least a smattering of hope that their release was being sought.

> [T]he more they discussed the articles they intended to buy, the more their humour improved. Freddie even went out and plucked a few flowers....
>
> 'Shiao gieh, are you happy now that you are going home?' he asked with a smile that was almost sympathetic.
>
> I was so happy that I was afraid. (Pawley, 1935: 261)

Still more astonishing for the captives was to hear apparently ignorant bandits happily reading or reciting from memory passages from classic books such as the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and even the *Analects* of Confucius, certainly the result of listening to itinerant village storytellers. (Johnson, 1934: 69, 86; Mackay, 1927: 193; Howard, 1926: 147) Howard's reaction, marveling but bleakly dismissive, expressed the Ivy League view of bandits: "It seemed a pity that men of such education and culture should debase themselves by preying upon helpless and innocent people for a living." (Howard, 1926: 147) Johnson, chief officer on a coastal steamer who spent most of his five months' captivity cooped up in a cramped junk's hold secretly writing his diary out on torn-up cigarette cartons, can be forgiven his sardonic comment upon this revelation of the bandits' erudition:

> A new pest. Some of the bandits can read. When we try to get to sleep, one of the men starts a monotonous chant, reading from some Chinese book... it's the...Three Kingdoms.... Some of them know bits of it off by heart. They join in with the bits they know. Who the hell thought of educating bandits? (Johnson, 1934: 65-6)

Education notwithstanding, the old Chinese saying, 'When the wind is high, light a fire; when the night is dark, find a victim to kill', still summed up what a majority of bandit gangs were best at. For all the revelations that undercut the treaty port image of bandits, many foreign ticket memoirs brim over with instances of fearful and violent behaviour taken to a degree that can only be described as demonic:

> Every now and again a bandit gave [the spy] a cutting smack across his face.... They whipped themselves up with words and grew mad ... their faces white with passion and excitement....
>
> The bandits trooped back to the junk, shouting and waving their guns as if they were drunk. Their appetite for blood had been whetted by this first taste. But there was no one else to murder except us; and we went below as fast as we could. (Johnson, 1934: 106-9)

For Johnson, whose diary the comments are taken from, the flaying to death of the Japanese spy in this episode was clearly intended to cow the prisoners into submission. For the bandits, on the other hand, already holding on to their prisoners for two months with precious little reward for their constant tension, the incident reflected their heightening frustration as soldiers closed in.

Like most Chinese, bandits loved children and would often fuss over those that they found in a commandeered village while their anxious parents looked on. The resulting scenes were sometimes quite at odds with bandits' prevailing image:

> They called the babies *pou pei*, which means "Little darling", and jogged them up and down on their knees, and sang to them, and let them crawl about and patted their behinds, saying: 'Oh, nice fat bottom!' In fact they were very domesticated in that way. And the mothers were pleased to have the children taken off their hands for a while. (Pawley, 1935: 147-148)

For their own children, their only desire was that they should be able to live like the offspring of those well-heeled families who so often became their victims. (Lilius, 1930: 56) No doubt it was these contradictions, coupled with the all-round danger and insecurity of the lives they led, that encouraged the 'bandit nature' noticed by so many captives: a

capricious state of mind characterized by acute suspicion, a fragile vanity, and a tendency to fall rapidly into despair. (Johnson, 1934: 162; Price 1937: 830; Mackay, 1927: 194, 250) As Pawley put it, "The bandits were such a moody lot – always liable to fly into tantrums, when they were capable of anything. Then, as quickly as it had risen, their fury would abate and they would be friendly again. We never knew what to expect next." (1935: 135, 151)

Perhaps more surprising than anything else for foreign captives was to find the bandits agreeing whole-heartedly with all the criticisms levelled at them concerning the evil character of their profession. "'Who doesn't know that robbing is a bad profession....?'" was the gratifying reaction when Lundeen found himself allowed to preach repentance to the bandits during his captivity. (Lundeen, 1925: 31) "'We hunghutze are all *pu hao – t'ing pu hao!* (Bad – very bad indeed).'" confirmed one of Pawley's chiefs. (Pawley, 1935: 209) Many of them were "willing and eager to leave their present dreadful life", since they had been "forced [into it] against their will". (Taylor, 1922b: 70) Most yearned profoundly for a return to a life of tranquil normalcy, and, like Pu Shuming, admitted that if only the means were available they would cheerfully "reform and become a good citizen". (Parker, 1922: 42) Unfortunately, "leaving seems to most of them exactly the same as throwing themselves into the jaws of death", (Lundeen, 1925: 129) since "they saw the danger of being recognized and executed". (Strauss, 1931: 25) Only the stories heard from a confident American seemed to draw them out of their despair:

> One day they asked me about banditry in America. What opportunity would they have in that line of business if they could manage to get there? .... [Told] that there was an unlimited opportunity for every honest and industrious man both to make a good living and to possess his own home, they declared that they would not be bandits once they got to America. (Howard, 1926: 220)

4. 'When Worlds Collide': Chinese Bandits Confront Foreign Tickets

> *Until [then], I had thought of* 'hung hutzes,' *as more or less mythical beings. As I looked upon them standing or lying meekly before me, heard their complaints, and saw their scarred and diseased bodies, I comprehended with a new understanding that I was dealing with human beings not unlike those with whom I had been meeting all my life.* (Howard, 1926: 88-9)

As noted earlier, the fate of the foreign tickets was widely taken as the ultimate proof of China's decline into barbarism. There was another side to the kidnapping of foreigners, however, one which contemporary Western observers, irate at the besmirching of their carefully cultivated pride, could be forgiven for not noticing. Even as bandits danced for joy at the luck that their foreign ticket seemed to have brought them, they were at the same time a small part of a process that would eventually turn China on its head and transform their new get-rich-quick occupation into a relic of the past. For both sides, captors and captured, perhaps even for the people of the villages that this strange group passed through, there was a learning experience at work, and the captivity narratives reveal this experience perhaps more starkly than any other kind of source material. Though there were various intervening factors, such as language ability, individual character, and the conditions of captivity, it was generally true that the longer the captive spent with the bandits the closer the relationship between them became. Those with the leisure, the will and the ability to do so were often, to the benefit of historians, able to indulge in remarkably relaxed conversations with their captors.

Bandit attitudes toward their foreign captives were paradoxical. On the one hand, the tender sensibilities of the foreign tickets (or what, from the bandits' point of view, were perceived to be such) provided some of them with unlimited scope for fun, sometimes malicious. Describing in detail both the various ways of slow execution in China and the bandit custom of 'clipping the ticket' (sending home an ear or a finger from a

captive to speed ransom negotiations) were favourites. (Howard, 1926: 120-21; Pawley, 1935: 122, 143-44, 169, 193, 252-53) If Johnson's reaction to such threats was stoic ("....they don't dare do it to us. We smiled at him; if they are getting impatient all the better...."), (1934: 94) Pawley's was more impressionable:

> Night after night I lay with my heart thumping and a sensation of sickness at the pit of my stomach wondering how it felt to have one's ears and fingers hacked off and mud slapped on to the bleeding stumps. But I tried not to give the bandits the pleasure of gauging the dreadful anxiety their threats caused me. (1935: 123)

Playing mahjongg all night long just to keep their captives awake, commenting on various features of their bodies, gloating over their response to the call of nature, and cracking obscene jokes in loud voices to test the reaction were some of the other ways in which the capture of a foreign ticket brought the bandits more than the mere promise of a fat ransom. (Pawley, 1935: 98, 160, 186-87)

If the foreign captives were valued highly, it was often merely for putting within the bandits' grasp material objects and financial riches hitherto beyond their wildest dreams. (Powell, 1923a: 846; Howard, 1926: 34) Johnson, lamenting his own forlorn appearance ("coat torn all down the front, and no bottom to my trousers"), continues ironically: "[E]very day...the No. 1 jumps below, takes off my evening dress and puts on Pears' fawn camel-hair dressing-gown with fancy cording to the cuffs; and placing Blue's uniform cap at a rakish angle on his head, he jumps on deck and takes command." (1934: 66-67)

The gulf between the bandits' everyday lives and those of even the poorest of white expatriates was such that any article with the stamp of 'foreignness', whatever its purpose or value, became an object of almost superstitious regard. Brassieres became bandoliers, fountain pens cigarette holders, all equally hard to relinquish since they were icons of that mysterious world so far away that even their imaginations could not bridge the gap: "They loved the clocks and carried them with a swagger, swinging them from their hands like dinner-pails.... I saw a boy drinking out of my silver powder-box and carefully putting the cover on

afterward." (Aldrich, 1923: 676)

As men who had often become bandits precisely in order to assert their difference from the rest, the fine clothes they had 'borrowed' from the captives meant that they would at last be able to cut a dash among their fellow villagers and give proof to all who cared to see that they had once been 'friends' with the much-vaunted foreigner:

> In spirit... the bandits were dandies.... [F]rom time to time I noticed a familiar necktie tied about some bandit's head, turban wise. The second chief... had secured my watch and chain and my justice-of-the-peace medallion, which he wore swinging from the front of his jacket. (Mackay, 1927: 194)

On the other hand, the memoirs show that it was more than merely the material trappings of the West that drew bandits out of their beleaguered rural mind-set and gave them cause to reexamine their own ways of thinking and behaviour. Foreigners who fell into bandits' hands also gave form, it would seem, to all the inchoate yearnings for a better and fairer life that had brought these men into banditry in the first place. Howard's bandits, we have seen, were resolved to become respected citizens of a democracy once they had made it to America. The obviously sincere religious beliefs shown even by those captives who were not missionaries; their social relationships, such as their treatment of women and their care for each other's welfare – all these were sources of continuing delight and wonder. We also find bandits singing 'Tipperary' and 'Old McDonald's Farm' ("the chorus of which was duly grunted and cackled and quacked by the hearties"), learning English, reading foreign magazines, and even shaking hands with and opening doors for one another. (Johnson, 1934: 63-4; Pawley, 1935: 126, 175, 207, 218; Howard, 1926: 277) All this was a far cry from their media image as brutal fiends whose natural habitat was the abattoir.

> It was Sunday night and I had been a captive for three weeks.... One of the songs [I knew] was 'Nearer My God to Thee'. So... I sang that old hymn for the bandits. When I came to the end of the second stanza, one of them stole up behind me and motioned for me to stop. It was Ying Wu, the loudest talker and the foulest-mouthed bandit in

the camp.... But at that moment his eyes were filled with tears, and he was sobbing like a child. Not a bandit spoke.

Ying Wu grasped me tightly by the arm. He was shaking all over. Finally he was able to speak, and in a husky, broken voice, he said, "I used to sing that song in a mission school when I was a boy. I cannot bear to hear it now. Do not sing it again." (Howard, 1926: 172)

Later on Howard reflects on one of the transformations his captivity had brought about in the bandits' behaviour:

I had formerly been prone to think of bandits as subject only to evil influences. I had one interesting experience with 'my bandits' which proved... that these fellows were also susceptible to good influences .... I naturally, from the very first day of my captivity, always thanked the bandits for the things they did for me and for the little courtesies they showed me. During the first few days they laughed and made fun of me whenever I thanked them.... By the end of the first week they had stopped ridiculing me. By the end of the second week they were thanking me for the little things I did for them. Before the first month was over, I heard a number of them thank each other; and by the end of the second month all, except three or four rowdies among them, had the habit of thanking one another fairly fixed. (Howard, 1926: 226-27)

Their contrasting cultural backgrounds were also a source of ceaseless friction and misunderstanding between the foreign tickets and their captors, particularly with regard to relations between the sexes. Pawley's recollections provide numerous examples. The fact that a woman could not only publicly bare her feet to wash in a river but even speak openly of missing her husband were unheard of moral lapses, given the Chinese taboo against exposing the female foot and the bandits' own taboo against mentioning their abandoned wives:

Sometimes they talked of their children... but they do not think it good form to mention their wives. A man loses face if he alludes to his wife.... The reverse applies, too; no self-respecting Chinese woman would dream of discussing her husband. In fact, this was one of the ways in which the bandits enjoyed baiting me.... If they could goad

me into saying that I missed my husband, too, they would rock with triumphant glee, because they had forced me into an indecent admission. (Pawley, 1935: 127, 140)

The common-enough Western habits of kissing, dancing, and, in Pawley's case, shaking hands also became the source of ribald jeers and laughter. (Pawley, 1935: 218-19)

As suggested by the example of one of Pawley's chiefs, who prudishly (and hypocritically) reproved her for her "indecency" in sleeping under the same quilt as her male fellow captive, (Pawley, 1935: 210) for many bandits, Westerners constituted the embodiment of all that was immoral. The assumption that they indulged cheerfully in such rites as group marriage was one that they found hard to discard even when Pawley sought to put them in their place:

"But an Englishman only takes one wife," I explained, "not like your people."

He shook his head. "No," he contradicted. "That is not right... the foreign men and women... are the most immoral people on earth, and they take each other's husbands and wives whenever they want to!" (Pawley, 1935: 139)

The suggestion that monogamy was the norm was a conversation stopper: surely any real man with the money to afford it would surround himself with all the wives he needed? What further proof was needed of China's superiority over other nations?

I suggested that such being the case, they probably had several wives, but this each man denied, stating that he was very poor and therefore only had one wife. This talk dragged on for half an hour, during which time we learned a lot about each other's domestic affairs. (Howard, 1926: 63)

Knowing that in Chinese culture tortoises and rabbits were symbols of cuckoldry and illicit sex, Pawley once caused a mighty uproar when she amused herself by drawing pictures of those animals on a wall:

[Sulky Sydney] seized me by the arm...."Lick them off before I beat you!"

But I remained sulkily obdurate, and eventually he scratched them

> out himself with his big knife, swearing at me all the while.... I told him indignantly what I thought of him for using [such language] in my presence....
>
> They guffawed and thumped their knees with delight, and insisted upon my relating my entire vocabulary of Chinese swear-words.... (Pawley, 1935: 134-35)

The wrath of the bandits came down upon her particularly hard because the episode no doubt reminded many of them that they had left behind wives when they took to the hills.

There was clearly a double sexual standard at work here, however, for even as Pawley's bandits took pride in reminding her of her moral 'lapses', men held captive with other bands were being offered women to sleep with:

> A crowd of women gathered round the windows to look at us and passed jokes at our expense. At the same time some of the bandits came over and suggested that the women should sleep with us. We looked over and the women giggled, quite willing. We told them that we did not fornicate in public.... "In England, they seem very particular", the bandits said and began to ask us more embarrassing questions, which we refused to answer. (Johnson, 1934: 184-85)

At the same time, bandits found much to admire in their captives even as they wondered about them, especially the female ones. The level of education (demonstrated by a school blazer complete with badge) which allowed Pawley not only to write as well as a man but also to nurse their wounds; the fact that she was adept at Chinese (while her male companion was not; he was assumed to be mad) as well as her native English; and her excellent vocal skills made her the object of no little respect. (Pawley, 1935: 41-2, 107, 113-14, 146, 171-72) Equally enlightening was the discovery they made when an overnight stay in a small village gave her the opportunity to take a bath: with the exception of her great unbound feet, she was no different from any Chinese woman! If this revelation was a source of wonder, the fact that the men, too, apart from their beards and chest-hair, were also the same as themselves was only marginally less so. (Pawley, 1935: 110, 222) If there was a difference,

it was, as a bandit from another gang put it, that the foreigners with their white skins appeared "one hundred and twenty per cent clean!" (Howard, 1926: 85)

In other ways, too, these unlikely intercultural experiences were eye opening. The behaviour of the foreign captives compared to that of their Chinese counterparts was a case in point. For prosperous rural Chinese families, the occasional kidnapping was just one of the natural hazards of life, and Chinese who fell into bandit hands appear to have abandoned themselves to fate. When, as was often the case, the ransom sum was beyond their family's means, they had no choice but to resign themselves to a death that would hopefully come sooner rather than later. As men among men (by their own reckoning, at least), bandits despised anyone who cringed or refused to stand up for themselves, and offenders were often killed out of disgust rather than anger. The apparent courage and strength of character shown by the proud foreigners (fortified no doubt by confidence in their government's release efforts as well as perhaps by an innate sense of superiority over their captors), who refused to bow their heads but merely commended themselves to their God, was a startling contrast with their Chinese counterparts. (Howard, 1926: 81-2; Pawley, 1935: 189; Powell, 1945: 100) Far from provoking the bandits to still greater displays of wrath, as might have been expected, it evidently impressed them favourably. (Strauss, 1931: 24-5; Mackay, 1927: 251)

> Suddenly the bandit next to me jabbed his revolver against my heart. I laughed and told him he couldn't frighten me that way. In a few minutes, with a frightful scowl he did it again. I laughed again. It really did amuse me, as I didn't think for a minute he would shoot me down in cold blood. The Chief patted me on the back the second time and held up his thumb above his closed fist. I will confess I was terribly pleased and flattered to have a bandit call me Number One. (Aldrich, 1923: 679)

Consequently, given the additional factor of the bandits' fear of retribution (whether official or supernatural) should they harm their victim, most foreign captives received relatively humane treatment, insofar as circumstances allowed. (Blue, 1934: 20) The Shanghai journalist George

Sokolsky, on hand to welcome the Lincheng captives on their return to liberty, observed that they were "so healthy and fine-looking a lot of men... that many a... foreigner envied them their rest on the heights of Paotzuku [Baozugu, the bandits' stronghold]." (*CWR*, 14 July, 1923: 209)

Most bandits, even after receiving the ransom they had demanded, were loathe to part with the foreigner who had passed so much time in their midst, now that they had 'made a relationship' with him or her.

> When they said good-bye, the bandits were charming. They gave us cigarettes and shook hands and said, Why didn't we join them next year and kidnap someone else? and that if they ever attacked a ship and found us on it, they wouldn't molest us. One apologized, saying that this was their first year at kidnapping, but that the gang would be better at it next year with what they'd learnt from us. (Johnson, 1934: 232)

Sometimes it was from feelings of friendship, sometimes from a more calculated expectation, that some of them invited their captive back for the next year's raiding season.

> As the chief talked, his ideas expanded. With more arms he and his companions could capture more foreigners.... I was distinctly astonished to learn just what underlay his descriptions... and just how powerful his friendship would be.
>
> What he was after was so to impress me that I would agree to throw in my lot with him and become a member of his bloody fraternity in full standing.... [H]e and the head chief had been so struck with my fortitude that the idea of inviting me to join them had occurred to them both.... I would be a great help, he stated, because I would know best how foreigners could be taken, would be able to judge what amounts they could safely be asked to pay and would be able to carry on all the necessary correspondence and negotiations.
>
> Astonished and indignant as I was, I pretended to fall in with the suggestion.... (Mackay, 1927: 251)

Episodes like this say much, not only about bandits' need for practical resources to survive in a world weighted against them, but also about their apparent lack of racial chauvinism. At least one foreign ticket was

actually invited to become the gang's chief:

> Suddenly I felt a tapping at my knee, and looking down I saw three bandits standing at the foot of my "bed".... In confidential tones they told me that they had come representing a number of the bandits who had been talking matters over during the evening. They had understood that I had, at one time, belonged to a band of "hung hutzes" in America .... They recognized that physically I was large, and... afraid of nothing. Furthermore, I was educated, could speak Chinese, and understood how to heal wounds and diseases. I was, therefore, just the man to be their chief. It was an elective position among them, and a number of them had already decided to offer it to me. They hoped that I would accept.... I was about to laugh at them, but looking into their faces I realized to my astonishment that they were really serious....
>
> "Whew! What next!" I thought, as I fell back upon my brick bed. (Howard, 1926: 90-91)

Equally surprising is that, if captives' reflections are to be taken at face value, genuine feelings of friendship seem to have sprung up between some of them and their bandit captors. Of course, the conditions for such friendship to grow were that the captive keep an open mind and that the bandits respect him as a man, which usually precluded the same thing happening with the Chinese captives. Mackay reflected on his close acquaintance with one chief he encountered in Manchuria:

> I got acquainted with one bandit chief, a very old man.... We smoked the pipe of peace at our first meeting....
>
> I flatter myself that this hardened old sinner's friendship toward me is genuine.... [S]ome months after Han had left us, I received a message from him... asking me to come and see him once again, as his guest in his freebooters' stronghold.... When we parted in the morning, with many words of mutual affection, I promised the grizzled old bandit that I would see him again some time, and I intend to do so very soon, provided his head is still growing on his shoulders. (Mackay, 1927: 254)

Given the harsh conditions of the bandit existence as well as the frequent presence of violence-prone psychopaths within a gang, striking up

a friendship was often a necessary survival tactic. After using his medical skills to persuade one trachoma-stricken chief to allow him to share his private tent, Howard reflected:

> It is not too much to state here that this episode marked the beginning, not only of a close association, but even of a real friendship between us. I am sure that I owed the good health that stayed by me during all the rest of my captivity, and probably my life, to my friendship with this "old" bandit commander. (Howard, 1926: 145)

Howard would later surprise the other bandits by saving the man's life while crossing a river. (Howard, 1926: 191-92) In a poignant postscript to his friendship with this bandit whose nickname, either because of his splendid upturned moustache or from his proclivity for bathing, was 'Jih Pen Tzu' (*Ribenzi*, Son of a Japanese), six months after his release Howard received a letter from the man throwing himself on Howard's mercy:

> If you would be so kind as to recall our friendship of the past and have pity on my condition of the present, I wish you would look up a suitable job... so that I can make a living. If there be any future for me, I should consider the balance of my life a gift from you.
>
> ....
>
> Your younger brother,
>
> JIH PEN TZU (Howard, 1926: 270-72)

Unfortunately, Howard does not tell us if or how he responded to this plea for assistance.

As for the foreign captives, most nursed no protracted hatred for the authors of their suffering despite the privations they were forced to endure. Some, despite the occasional nightmare, even felt grateful that they had been granted experiences denied to others. (Pawley, 1935: 87-8, 185) For every psychopath who sought to make their lives even more miserable than their fugitive condition demanded, (Pawley, 1935: 136; Johnson, 1934: 110; Howard, 1926: 120-21) there were others who befriended them and offered what small human kindnesses they could. (Mackay, 1927: 190-91; Pawley, 1935: 149; Monsen, 1931: 120-21) As a result, former captives generally regarded their captors with pity, even with a lingering affection,

mixed with a hope that they would one day have the opportunity to return to the path of rectitude. (Howard, 1926; Lundeen, 1925: 143; Taylor, 1922b: 70) They had had a chance to see deeper than most could into their captors' minds, and thus to understand the real causes of many a resort to banditry— the desire to survive, the yearning to be free, or the craving for a life of dignity in place of that of the serf. As a result of their rare opportunity to observe China's under-belly at first hand, they had been able to perceive the human mix that a bandit gang constituted, and to see that bandits were not so very different from the men they had encountered in other walks of life. Such tolerant and sympathetic attitudes set those foreign tickets apart from the broad mass of their compatriots.

The lessons being learned by bandits and captives alike sometimes extended to the people among whom they dwelled. For desperately poor Chinese villagers, 'overseas' must have seemed the rough equivalent of one of the Nine Levels of Heaven. The psychological impact of seeing the once-powerful foreigner, reduced to a bedraggled and exhausted specter and paraded before them by a gang of despised and scruffy local bandits, is clear in many of the memoirs:

> The ignorant peasants were overwhelmed with admiration for the bandits' cleverness.... "So you really expect to get immense fortunes for your foreigners?" they asked with their mouths hanging open incredulously. And Sydney replied that undoubtedly they did. "And if the ransom is not good enough, we will shoot them. That is all." (Pawley, 1935: 251)

Others found that the villagers would burst into laughter as they passed by. (Johnson, 1934: 175; Lundeen, 1925: 135-36)

To imagine anything similar, one would have to go back to the effect of those initial 'Strangers at the Gate' whose appearance off the Eastern shoreline a century or so before had first set in motion the process of Chinese cultural reassessment. (See Wakeman, 1966) Comparing (sometimes favourably) their own ragged appearance with that of these unexpected guests, seeing how equally vulnerable they both were to the whims of bandits, some may even have unconsciously begun to redraw the line between 'us' and 'them' which had hitherto been so clearly demarcated.

Unlike their predecessors, however, having concluded that these were not gods but frail specimens of humanity like themselves, these peasants' hearts more often than not went out to them in the form of a thousand small kindnesses — a bowl of noodles or hot water here, a dirty blanket or comb there, sometimes water for washing or a sorghum leaf for a menstruating woman. (Aldrich, 1923: 677, 682-83; Howard, 1926: 49; Pawley, 1935: 40, 65, 74, 101, 198)

As for the foreign tickets, they were among the few Westerners, besides outstation missionaries, allowed to observe the underside of rural Chinese society firsthand, and for most it was a chastening experience. At first sight, the villagers who stood gaping in awe at the apparition that had suddenly appeared in their midst seemed to them, not without reason, the roughest of country bumpkins, as far divorced as could be imagined from all that was civilized and modern, the poverty and hardship of their lives beyond belief. (Lilius, 1930: 60-1; Pawley, 1935: 36-40) It is clear from most accounts that, faced with this vision of a world so obviously backward in all material respects from their own, the captives slipped naturally into a complex attitude of curiosity mixed with condescending disdain. Yet, with the passage of time, the evident sympathy of these villagers, for whom the foreigners were, after all, their fellow-victims, together with their natural kind-heartedness and capacity for hard work, rarely failed to leave them genuinely moved.

In these extraordinary and never-to-be-repeated circumstances, foreign tickets and Chinese villagers found themselves the mutual victims of bandits' desperate struggle for survival. Consequently, for every one of the captives who came away with his or her assumptions about innate Chinese barbarity reconfirmed, there were many more who had been able to perceive the taut-stretched strings of frustrated humanity among their bandit captors; to realize that these poor villages and their inhabitants were simply a backwater of society barely subsisting within a system weighted impossibly against them. For genteel Westerners, there could have been few things more humbling than to be thrown upon the mercies of such people and to find them as human as themselves. Alongside their growing awareness of the fundamental reasons for the backwardness of

China's villages, these foreign captives had been granted a rarely available, intimate perspective on the 20th-century Chinese countryside and its problems.

5. Conclusion: 'A Great Deliverance'

The experiences of the foreign tickets throw light on a variety of themes in Republican history. Historians, at least those focusing on rural society, cannot but come up against the bandit presence that stalked the stage throughout the period. Whether investigating village conditions, analyzing army recruitment, delving into diplomatic snarl-ups, or tracking the process of popular self-awakening, researchers have had to confront the reality of that presence. The problem hitherto has been the difficulty of obtaining materials that approach bandits as people with a problem rooted in social conditions rather than seeing them merely as a social problem in themselves. As a result, bandits have been treated far more lightly than their numbers and influence should demand, and the memoirs of the foreign tickets thus fill a major gap. Indeed, these memoirs furnish such a fascinating human and historical record that it is hard to understand why they have been so thoroughly ignored up to now.

The foreign captives' privileged status, as people who came face to face with bandits and lived to tell the tale, gave them an opportunity for rare insight into the lives and perspectives of these people. They reveal a growing sense, not only among the bandits themselves but also in the villages through which they dragged their reluctant charges, that the all-powerful foreigners were not so different from themselves after all. Precisely because they were so human, they were as vulnerable as anybody else was, when taken unawares, to the assaults of determined individuals. To their credit, none of the foreign tickets ever lost their sense of horror and hopelessness at the sights they were forced to witness — the rapes, the arson, the willful destruction of innocent lives, and so on. At the same time, their protracted contact with the bandits also enabled them to observe them at those times when they were not living

up to the accepted media image of them, and to understand the varied circumstances that had led so many people into the bandit life against their will. They learned that these were people who laughed and cried, hoped and feared like anyone else, who burned with resentment or with ambition to succeed in a world impossibly stacked against them, who dreamed of a better life to come and meanwhile prayed for divine appreciation of their inability to abandon their reprehensible lifestyle.

*

The concept that immediately comes to mind is, of course, the 'Stockholm Syndrome'. The term was coined from an incident in which four Swedes held captive in a bank vault later identified with and developed a strong attachment to their captors. It refers to a condition in which a captive, from a combination of relief and gratitude, comes to depend on a captor after the latter threatens his or her life but does not carry out the threat. The captive then avoids showing any negative feelings out of fear, hoping thus to prevent another threat of death. When the captive is freed, he or she may even seek to help the former captor such as by refusing to cooperate with prosecutors. The captive sees the captor as having saved his or her life, which the captor had threatened in the first place and 'saved' only by not carrying out the threat of death.[8]

Having described the syndrome, however, it is hard to say how far it applies to the relationship between Chinese bandits and their foreign captives, which was after all a microcosm of the complex mixture of resentment and yearning that held early 20th century China and the Western world together. For all that bandits resented the superior attitudes of the whites that moved amongst them and saw a chance to exploit them for their own advancement, they also saw them as symbols of a world for which they themselves were striving. The consequent love-hate relationship was thus rather different from that which develops when the kidnapping is part of an ideological stand-off in which the captors see themselves as the representatives of a new world striving to replace the old.[9] This was not a case of foreigners being despised because they were foreigners or because they were seen as representing multinational interests;

they were simply seen as the most effective instruments for bringing about what the bandits demanded.

Bandits' practical circumstances also made the situation rather different. Despite the inevitable threats to kill their foreign captives, bandits knew as well as anyone what the consequences would be. Spending most of their time on the run and always the vulnerable side when it came to a confrontation with soldiers, they consequently took a pragmatic rather than an ideological view. Most were in the game for life, not for death, and suicide in the name of an ideal was not an option. Foreign captives who boasted medical or other skills or anything else that promised to aid the bandits' struggle could be treasured, perhaps admitted to the gang, or even offered the post of chief. Those who demonstrated qualities worth emulating, such as spiritual calm or personal manners, could become unconscious teachers.

From the captives' point of view, a sense of cultural pride or superiority, sometimes combined with Christian joy, intervened to dilute the fear of death. The absence of ideological motives meant that only the most pathological of the bandits appeared as a real threat to the captives, leaving them with the leisure to take a more condescending view of the rest. Since they rarely took the threats of death seriously, or if they did merely saw them as evidence of God's will at work, they do not seem to have developed feelings of dependence; certainly none sought to protect their former captors after their release. All in all, then, the number of intervening factors, from the outlook of both captives and captors, appears to have prevented the emergence of a Stockholm Syndrome-type situation. Admittedly, though, none of the released foreigners ever indulged in the luxury of a psychological examination.

*

Through the many small dramas involving the kidnapping of foreigners for ransom that were played out during the 1920s and 1930s, China's bandits played their own humble part in the changes sweeping the nation. Fortunately for the historian, some of the victims of that strategy, the so-called 'foreign tickets', left an inside view of that process for posterity. Revealing a new and unexpected angle on the tragic and

turbulent years of China's birth as a modern nation, foreign-ticket memoirs provide moving and accurate evidence by participant observers of what it was like to live the lives of hunted and despised bandits in China. These memoirs rescue China's bandits from the limbo of history and restore them, warts and all, to the ranks of people.

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NOTES

1) As an indication of how significant the piece appeared to concerned Chinese, the *Guowen zhoubao*'s translation was reprinted forty years later in a Taiwan monthly magazine. See '*Feiku yusheng*' 匪窟余生, *Chunqiu* 春秋, vol. 5, No. 1-No. 5 (July-November, 1966). In Japan, perhaps as a result of the government's growing interest in the Three Eastern Provinces of 'Manchuria', a translation appeared within a short time. See Etō Toshio 衛藤利夫, "*Hoku-Man no bazoku ni torawareta hanashi – Beikoku ishi Howard hakushi no shuki*" 北満の馬賊に囚われた話－米国医師ホワード博士の手記 (A story of captivity among North Manchuria's bandits – the memoirs of the American doctor, Howard), Tōa 東亜 (Tokyo), vol. 1, no. 6 (Oct. 1928) to vol. 2, no. 6 (June 1929). The authors are indebted to Mr. Yoshida Masanori 吉田雅憲, formerly of Momoyama Gakuin University Library, for his help in acquiring copies of this item. The enduring interest in Howard's book became evident when it was reprinted in the United States as late as the 1970s.
2) The 'foreign tickets' have been discussed in detail in an earlier work by one of the present authors. See Billingsley (1988): 172-77.
3) The exception is Billingsley (1988).
4) See Xu Youwei and Bei Sifei (1998). The historical importance of these materials is summarized in Xu Youwei and Bei Sifei (1999).
5) In response to a presidential directive instructing him, "[D]o not hesitate to give the several guarantees demanded by the bandits", Anderson pledged: "I, Roy S. Anderson, am an American citizen and a friend of China in life and death. As the brethren in the mountains are having hard times, as all Tan Chai [chiefs] have shown genuine sincerity in their actions and words in all the conferences, and as they are willing to submit, I am willing to guarantee that my brethren will be organized into an army .... I am also willing to guarantee that after the brethren are 'called and pacified', all their former crimes will be pardoned by the Government ...". The bandits' representative at the negotiations responded accordingly: "I .... representing all brethren here, beg to say that we are willing to be 'called and pacified' .... We have full confidence in Mr. Anderson and *to the person of Mr. Anderson* we pledge that we will permanently observe the above things." (Nozinski, 1990: 155, 161-62; emphasis added) Anderson was reported to have been furious when the military went back on its word and executed many of the bandits' leaders.
6) For details on the soldier bandits, see Billingsley (1988).
7) Bandits' relations with missionaries are discussed separately by the pres-

ent authors. See Billingsley & Xu (1998).

8) On the Stockholm Syndrome, see Havard (1992).

9) Elsewhere, the authors have pointed to the contrast between the behaviour of bandits towards foreigners and that of the early Communist guerrillas, whose ideological inflexibility often led them to commit far worse atrocities than those committed by regular bandits. See Billingsley & Xu (1998).

FROM 'FOREIGN DEVILS' TO 'FOREIGN TICKETS': BANDIT CAPTIVITY MEMOIRS FROM REPUBLICAN CHINA

Philip BILLINGSLEY & XU Youwei

This article looks at the experiences of the so-called 'foreign tickets', men and women whose fate it had been to fall into the hands of one of the bandit gangs that abounded in early 20th century China, and to be held as an 'insurance' ticket against whatever it was that that particular gang was demanding. Inseparable as banditry was from the chaotic process of China's rebirth, were it not for the experiences of those foreign tickets we would know little about its detailed workings, for bandit life-stories are hard to track down. Fortunately, many of those who survived their captivity set down their experiences in the form of a memoir. From those memoirs, we are able to learn something of what it meant not only to be a foreign ticket, but also to be a bandit in those turbulent years.

Through the prism of such accounts, this article seeks new insights into the nature of Chinese bandits and banditry, and pursues aspects of the mutual regard that often grew up between bandits and their foreign captives. Revealing a new and unexpected angle on the tragic and turbulent years of China's birth as a modern nation, foreign-ticket memoirs provide moving and accurate evidence by participant observers of what it was like to live the lives of hunted and despised bandits in China. These memoirs rescue China's bandits from the limbo of history and restore them, warts and all, to the ranks of people.